

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1156

INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

S E C R E T BANGKOK 3403

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, TH

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS - NEW SHAN PROPOSAL

REF: A. STATE 040599; B. RANGOON 0329; C. BANGKOK 2001

SUMMARY:

RATHER THAN REJECT THE LATEST SHAN PROPOSAL FOR WELL-KNOWN REASONS, WE BELIEVE IT SHOULD BE CAREFULLY EXAMINED AS A POSSIBLE MEANS OF PROMOTING A SETTLEMENT BETWEEN THE SHANS AND THE GUB. WE SUGGEST THAT CONGRESSMAN WOLFF BE ENCOURAGED TO PRESS FOR ANSWERS TO THE MANY QUESTIONS THE PLAN FAILS TO RESOLVE AND AT THE SAME TIME SOUND OUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF STARTING TALKS BETWEEN THE SHANS AND THE GUB. END SUMMARY.

1. THE JOINT SHAN UNITED ARMY (SUA) AND SHAN STATE ARMY (SSA) PLAN INSPIRES WELL-KNOWN AND VALID OBJECTIONS; NAMELY, THAT IT WILL NOT WORK AND THAT IT IS NOT WORTH THE PRICE WE WOULD PAY IN TERMS OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THE GUB. SINCE IT DOES, HOWEVER, HOLD THE PROMISE OF AN ALLIANCE OF TRAFFICKERS AND DISSIDENTS WHO CONTROL A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF THE OPIUM CROP IN SHAN STATE, IT SHOULD NOT BE REJECTED WITHOUT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY RANGOON THAT THE ONLY FAINT GLIMMER OF HOPE IN THE PLAN IS THE POSSIBILITY OF USING IT AS A

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MEANS TO PROMOTE SOME TYPE OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GUB,

THE SHANS AND POSSIBLY THE KACHINS. EMBASSY RANGOON MAY HAVE SOME IDEAS ON THE SHAPE OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT, ALTHOUGH WE SUSPECT THAT ONLY THROUGH FURTHER CONTACTS WITH THE DISSIDENTS WOULD ANY POSSIBILITIES EMERGE.

2. AS A FIRST STEP, THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD ENCOURAGE CONGRESSMAN WOLFF TO CONTINUE HIS CONTACTS WITH THE SHANS THROUGH ADRIAN COWELL. BESIDES ATTEMPTING TO GET ANSWERS TO THE MANY QUESTIONS RAISED BY EMBASSY RANGOON (REF. B), COWELL SHOULD MAKE THE POINT THAT THE PLAN MIGHT BE TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY IF PROVISIONS WERE MADE FOR COOPERATION WITH THE GUB. COWELL, WHILE SYMPATHETIC TO THE SHAN CAUSE, IS INTELLIGENT AND REALISTIC ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULTIES THE PLAN RAISES AND WOULD PROBABLY BE FAIRLY EFFECTIVE IN GETTING THE SHANS TO TALK ABOUT COMPROMISE. IT IS LIKELY THAT NEGOTIATIONS WILL BREAK DOWN AT THIS STAGE AND THAT WOLFF HIMSELF MAY DROP THE PLAN IF SATISFACTORY ANSWERS ARE NOT PROVIDED AND THE SHANS APPEAR UNWILLING TO CONSIDER ANY TYPE OF COMPROMISE WITH THE GUB.

3. IF BY SOME OUTSIDE CHANCE THE SHANS ARE AT LEAST WILLING TO CONSIDER SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE WITH THE GUB, EMBASSY RANGOON MIGHT THEN BRIEF THE GUB, STRESSING OUR INTEREST IN SEEING AN AGREEMENT REACHED BETWEEN THE DISSIDENTS AND THE GUB. A COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT OF THE WARS WITH THE ETHNIC REBELS IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE RTG, USG AND THE GUB. ONLY WITH A SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM CAN ANY LONG-TERM PLANNING BE MADE TO REDUCE THE OPIUM CULTIVATION IN SHAN STATE AND THE GUB NEEDS TO FOCUS ITS MILITARY STRENGTH ON THE BURMESE COMMUNIST PARTY.

4. WE MIGHT ALSO CONSIDER AT THIS STAGE, BRIEFING GENERAL KRIANGSAK OF THE SUPREME COMMAND ON THE SHAN PROPOSAL. KRIANGSAK IS NOW NEGOTIATING WITH THE BURMESE DISSIDENTS AND MIGHT HAVE IDEAS ON HOW THE SHAN OFFER COULD BE USED TO FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS. IT IS NOT UNLIKELY THAT KRIANGSAK, WHO MET WITH SUA LEADER CHANG SHU-CH'UAN IN BANGKOK IN LATE DECEMBER 1974, ALREADY HAS SOME IDEA OF
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THIS PLAN.

5. EVEN IF THE POLITICAL AND PRACTICAL OBSTACLES WERE OVERCOME, WE WOULD STILL HAVE TO CONSIDER THE PRICE TAG ON THE SHAN PLAN. WE ESTIMATE THAT BY ACCEPTING THE PLAN, THE USG WOULD BE ENTERING INTO AN OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT TO SPEND SOMETHING ON THE ORDER OF 20-40 MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR, DEPENDING ON TONNAGE OF OPIUM BOUGHT AND PRICE.

FOR EXAMPLE, 200 TONS, OR HALF THE ESTIMATED CROP, AT
3100 BAHT/VISS, WOULD COME TO ABOUT 20 MILLION US.
KINTNER

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